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Organization: AOL (<http://www.aol.com>)

Providing Assurances against
Seismically Induced Levee Failure

Catastrophic failure of several Delta levees induced by an earthquake could result in export outages of several months. It could also have severe adverse effects on Delta agriculture, not only for the flooded islands, but also for non-flooded islands whose water supply in adjacent channels became too salty for use.

Export water users and Delta agriculture need assurances of two kinds regarding security of water supply and water quality in the face of this threat. One kind is an assurance that the CalFed plan adequately addresses this threat. The other kind is assurance that this plan will be carried out as anticipated over the long term.

How might this threat be addressed by the plan? For export users, there appear to be three, possibly related means.

1. Provide a system that will ensure enough water in storage and accessible south of the Delta to provide an emergency supply to export water users.
2. Provide an alternative means of transporting water from north to south across the Delta that is significantly less vulnerable to earthquake damage than the Delta channels. In other words, build an isolated facility, on the more stable soils of the eastern Delta, with enough capacity to deliver this emergency water supply.
3. Provide environmental and other operational requirements that allow for the storage of emergency supplies south of the Delta and/or transport of emergency supplies through an isolated facility.

For Delta agricultural users, there also appear to be two means:

1. Provide for the purchase of flooded Delta islands at pre-flooded land values (presumably to be incorporated into the Ecosystem Program) or repair of Delta levees and restoration of flooded islands to agriculture.
2. Provide for an alternative, emergency water supply to non-flooded islands whose adjacent channel water quality no longer made irrigation possible. This would involve providing conveyance to those islands from the eastern Delta and/or from an isolated facility. (This means is related to item 3 above.)

If these assurances were incorporated into the CalFed Plan, the issue becomes one of ensuring that things would actually occur as set forth in the plan.

For each of the above features of the plan, the assurance that it would be carried out could be as follows:

For assuring that emergency storage would be provided and/or that an isolated facility could be used for emergency supply for both Delta exporters and Delta agricultural users: Environmental and other requirements governing the operation of water facilities should be set forth in a multi-party contract, executed by at least one private party, and backed up by federal legislation. This contract and legislation should establish a process whereby changing environmental operational requirements would be a last resort after exhausting other environmental remedies. Further, this process should provide that if such requirements were changed and if those changes resulted in water supply shortages, the resulting shortages would be purchased by the Ecosystem Program. Also, Delta water users would have long term contracts, executed by at least one private party, backed up by federal legislation, setting forth their rights to emergency supplies when needed.

For assuring that funds would be available and used to purchase or re-establish agriculture on flooded islands: The sources, amounts, and method of disbursement of those funds should be set forth in a multi-party contract, executed by at least one private party, and backed up by federal legislation.